

Please talk with your physician about the blood glucose range that is best for you.

Diabetes: Hypoglycemia and Hyperglycemia

Hypoglycemia

Hypoglycemia occurs when your blood glucose (blood sugar) level drops too low to provide enough energy for your body's activities. This also is called low blood glucose. A normal blood glucose range varies with each person. The normal range is about 65 to 99 mg/dL. In most cases, patients with levels below 70 mg/dL are treated for low blood glucose. Please talk with your physician about the blood glucose range that is best for you.

Symptoms

- Hunger
- Nervousness and shakiness
- Sweating
- Dizziness or lightheadedness
- Sleepiness
- Confusion
- Difficulty speaking
- Feeling anxious or weak
- Irritability or mood change

Hypoglycemia also can happen while you are sleeping. Signs to watch for include:

- Pajamas or sheets damp from sweating
- Crying out or having nightmares
- Feeling tired, irritable or confused when you wake up

Causes of hypoglycemia

People taking medicines to lower blood glucose can have their blood glucose levels fall too low for a number of reasons, including:

- Meals or snacks that are too small, delayed or skipped
- Excessive doses of medicines to lower blood glucose
- Increased activity or exercise
- Excessive alcohol intake

Prevention

Following a regular schedule is important. Maintain your usual medication times with your usual meals and activities. You should remember several things to help prevent hypoglycemia:

- **Some diabetes medicines** can cause low blood glucose; ask your physician about yours.
- **Meal plans** designed by your dietitian can help you eat regular meals that fit your preferences and lifestyle.

- **Physical activities**, such as sports or exercise, may require a snack or an adjustment to your medication. Talk to your physician about what is right for you.
- **Blood glucose** should be checked regularly. Simply checking will help you know if you are having a hypoglycemic episode. Blood glucose of 70 mg/dL or lower, is considered low.
- **A quick source of sugar, like glucose tablets or gel**, should be kept with you at all times in case of a hypoglycemic episode so you are able to treat the problem right away.

Treatment—follow “The Rule of 15”

- If you think your blood glucose is too low, use a blood glucose meter to check your level.
- If it is 70 mg/dL or lower, take 15 grams of a fast-acting carbohydrate.

Take only 1 of the following options:

- 3 to 4 glucose tablets or a tube of glucose gel
- Small (4 ounce) juice box
- 3 sugar packets
- 8 ounces of skim milk
- Wait 15 minutes.
- Check your blood glucose again.
- Repeat the treatment until your blood glucose is within your normal range.

If you do not have your meter with you and are feeling symptoms of low blood glucose, follow “The Rule of 15.”

Hyperglycemia

Hyperglycemia is another name for high blood glucose. Please check with your physician for the blood glucose range that is best for you.

Symptoms

- Thirst
- Frequent urination
- Fatigue
- Blurred vision
- Increased hunger
- Dry skin
- Slow-healing wounds

Causes of hyperglycemia

Hyperglycemia may occur for several reasons, including:

- Change or increase in food intake
- Wrong or missed dose of insulin or diabetes medications (pills or injectables)
- Side effect of some medications
- Not enough physical activity
- Emotional stress
- Illness

Long-term complications

- Heart disease
- Kidney disease
- Vision loss
- Nerve damage
- Liver damage
- Skin sores
- Infection

Prevention and treatment

Hyperglycemia can be avoided in many cases. Remember these suggested actions to help manage your blood glucose.

- **Check food intake** and look for ways to improve your eating pattern. Ask your dietitian for help.
- **Take insulin or diabetes medications (pills or injectables)** in the prescribed doses and at the correct times. Contact your physician if you are concerned.
- **Drink plenty of water** to prevent dehydration.
- **Try increasing your physical activity** gradually and make it a part of your lifestyle.
- **Consider ways of reducing stress** through relaxation training or stress management.
- **See your physician** if you are ill to ensure the illness is treated as soon as possible.
- **Do not skip diabetes medications on sick days.** Contact your physician.